

# FIRE PLAN 2003

*Rocky Mountain Region*

*April, 2004*



Our principle objectives remain:

- SAFETY** for firefighters and our affected publics.
- SERVICE** to customers and communities.
- STEWARDSHIP** in our treatment of public lands entrusted in our care.



## National Fire Plan Stockholder Report

**FY-2003**

### Introduction

The National Fire Plan continues to be a top priority in this Region. Recently we conducted an important assessment of forest health and fire hazards on Forest Service lands to confirm vegetative conditions throughout the five state area which we will address more at the end of this report.

In 2003, however, we learned from the fire season of 2002, especially from one fire, the Hayman Fire, the largest fire in Colorado history. It became an important classroom setting for us.

A recent study last October of the Hayman Fire by the Rocky Mountain Research Station concluded that large-scale fuel treatments, thinning and prescribed burning are needed to change condition class in vulnerable overcrowded forests to be effective.

You can find a link to that study on our newly updated website  
[www.fs.fed.us/r2/fire2/nfp/](http://www.fs.fed.us/r2/fire2/nfp/).

We hope you are a frequent visitor to the site in the upcoming year to learn more about what we are doing to reduce the fire risk near your community."

### Overview

This report highlights the National Fire Plan accomplishments in the Rocky Mountain Region for fiscal year 2003. In keeping with the *Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan of 2002*, accomplishment will be presented by the four goals as outlined in the Implementation Plan.

### Funding

In 2003, the Rocky Mountain Region received over \$31 million for wildland fire preparedness, \$26 million for hazardous fuels reduction, and \$8.3 million in State and Private cooperative forestry program funding in FY 2003.

The Region provided over \$6,000,000 in funds for grants to States and rural communities for national fire plan and cooperative forestry projects.

### Fire Season 2003

The

The Rocky Mountain Region saw better than average fire starts this past fire season. However, acres burned were well below average. It is estimated that 98% of all recorded starts were still contained and controlled following initial attack.

The remaining 2% that escaped and became large fires were still influenced by extended drought



conditions in the Region where most fuel types are dry and prone to large fires.

?? The Rocky Mountain Multi-Agency Coordination Group (MAC) and various MAC committees operated for only 24 days to efficiently



manage critical fire resources in FY03.

Type of Fires	Number of Fires	Number of Acres Burned
All Fires	11,533	322,368
FS wildland fires only	810	56,495
FS wildland fire use fires	4	1,873
5 year Average	9,356	443,886

-Rocky Mountain Geographic Area, hosted eighteen Type II Incident Management Team (IMT) assignments and 1 fire use Typ II IMT. There were no Type I incidents in the Region last year.

The interagency fire information center at the Rocky Mountain Area Coordination Center to provide timely and accurate information to the media and the public successfully completed its second year of operation during the FY03 fire season.

#### Additional statistics:

-Burned Areas Emergency Rehabilitation plans include:

1. 4 approved plans
2. \$6.4 million in funding approved
3. Plans cover 36,954 burned acres (Federal, State, and private).

### Goal One: Improve Fire Prevention and Suppression

*“Losses of life are eliminated, and firefighter injuries and damage to communities and the environment from severe, unplanned and unwanted wildland fire are reduced.”*



### Accomplishments:

-All National Forest Management Area Systems (NFMAS) Forest data bases have been updated and reviewed

-NFMAS re-certifications have been completed on the Pike & San Isabel, San Juan, Rio Grande and Nebraska National Forests.

-Fire Management Plans on all Forests were completed.

-Initial and extended attack capabilities were fully funded and available in 2003.

-Effective cost management principles were applied to all incidents

-Ninety-Eight percent (98%) of all fires were contained in the first 24 hours of initial attack in the Region.

-A Fire Training Specialist was needed and the position filled to assure that all standards of training and qualifications were met.





## Goal Two - Reduce Hazardous Fuels

*Hazardous fuels are treated, using appropriate tools, to reduce the risk of unplanned and unwanted wildland fire to communities and to the environment.*

### Accomplishments:

-The Region accomplished approximately 64,160 acres of fuel treatments or approximately 92% of the assigned target. This includes all mechanical and prescribed fire treatments. Approximately, 1,881 acres of accomplishment were from wildland fire use<sup>1</sup>.

-Approximately, 45,494 acres were accomplished in the Wildland Urban Interface or 71 percent of the Region's treatment acres.

-Emphasized integrating fuels treatments with vegetative management and all other resource programs to positively affect on-the-ground outcomes and target accomplishment.



<sup>1</sup> **Wildland Fire Use** – The application of the Appropriate Management Response to naturally-ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives in predefined designated areas outlined in Fire Management Plans. Operational management is described in the Implementation Plan (Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP)).



The Front Range Fuels Treatment Partnership (FRFTP) was supported through the redirection of funds to the Pike San Isabel NF, Arapaho Roosevelt NF and the Colorado State Forest Service. The goal of the strategy is to enhance community stability and restore fire-adapted ecosystems through identification, prioritization and rapid implementation of hazardous fuels treatment projects in the Front Range of Colorado.

-Initiated actions to accelerate the implementation of the National Fire Plan and to integrate this work in a broader effort called the Accelerated Watershed/Vegetation Restoration Plan (AWRP). The AWRP emphases include:

- Improvement of watershed health;
- Increased tree and shrub vigor;
- Strategic placement of resources and treatments in landscapes with the highest risk, including the Wildland Urban Interface and municipal watersheds.

-Updated the Rocky Mountain Region Land Management Planning Desk Guide for Fire and Fuels Management to reflect the Federal Fire Policy, Cohesive Strategy, National Fire Plan and the Western Governors Ten Year Comprehensive Strategy.

-Supported Forest Plan Revision efforts - Black Hills, Big Horn and Medicine Bow on

analysis and review of draft documents.

- Supported efforts to complete the Regional Lynx Amendment within established time frames.

- Fuels Management for Agency -- Administrators Training was offered in May 2003 with 18 participants from four regions and four agencies. Supported companion Line Officers Workshop at the National Prescribed Fire Training Center.

- Expanded on-going partnership with the National Prescribed Fire Training Center through instructor support and fall burning opportunities in Colorado and Wyoming.

- Established a Continuing Education in Fuels Management Course. First course was held May 5<sup>th</sup>, 2003.

- Developed a regional template for the Wyden Amendment Authorities for hazardous fuels reduction projects.

- Supported interagency contracting efforts and development of Indefinite Delivery/Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) contracts.

### **Air/Smoke Management**

- Tested new technology for accurate smoke emissions and dispersion predictions working with the State of Colorado and the other interagency fire partners NPS, and BLM.

- Working closely with State of Colorado air quality specialists, was able to meet prescribed fire burning targets creating more opportunities to use fire while maintaining state air quality regulations to treat hazardous fuels.

- Working with the State of Wyoming on their Smoke Management Program, the Region assisted and reviewed 32

internal/external NEPA projects that affected air quality issues.

- Supported the monitoring of eleven Interagency Monitoring of protected visual environment (IMPROVE) sites, 11 National Atmospheric Deposition program (NADP) sites, and 62 lake sites representing 20 Wilderness areas.

- Tested new technology for accurate smoke emissions and dispersion predictions.

- Participating with other agencies; including the Western Regional Air Partnership (WRAP), Fire Emissions Joint Forum, Federal Leadership Forum, Wyoming and Utah Regional Haze State Implementation Plan (SIP) conducted reviews of 16 Prevention of Significant Deterioration PSD permit applications.

### **Goal Three - Restore Fire-adapted Ecosystems**

***“Fire-adapted ecosystems are restored, rehabilitated and maintained, using appropriate tools, in a manner that will provide sustainable environmental, social, and economic benefits.”***

### **Accomplishments:**

- The Forests in the Region completed 57 restoration projects at a cost of \$11.2 million on 2003 fires.

- The state of Colorado received \$ 7,029,700 for the fires to continue the restoration work on the 2002 fires in the State.



-Wyoming received \$134,000 to treat acres burned on the Black Hills NF within the perimeter of Elk Mtn. Complex fires.

-The Medicine Bow-Routt NF received \$90,000 for Bighorn sheep habitat improvement.

South Dakota received \$ 708,000 targeting acres burned on the Black Hills NF during the Elk Mtn, Roger Shack, and Jasper fires of 2001

Bessey Nursery received \$60,000 for improvement to the nursery facilities to provide reforestation need of the region for fire rehab.

#### **Goal Four - Promote Community Assistance**

***“Communities at risk have increased capacity to prevent losses from wildland fire and the potential to seek economic opportunities resulting from treatments and services.”***

#### **Accomplishments:**

-National Fire Plan funding for private forest land restoration was delivered through the stewardship program and 335 Landowner “Stewardship Plans” were developed. These “Stewardship Plans” involved over 180,000 acres of land.

-The Region through State and Private Forestry provided over \$600,000 in grants and financial assistance to over 150 communities and



businesses for harvesting, processing and marketing of small diameter trees from wildfire mitigation work.

-Established biomass energy partnerships with National Renewable Energy Lab, National Forest Products Lab, DOE, State Energy Programs and State Foresters (workshops, projects and technical assistance)

-Established the Colorado Wood Utilization and Marketing Assistance Center.

-Sited 2 small biomass energy units in Walden, CO and Nederland, CO.

-Established a Utilization & Marketing Specialist positions in 5 States providing technical assistance to sawmill and workshops on: harvesting, sawmill improvement, kiln drying, value added processing, log grading and marketing.

-State Assistance  
Cooperative Fire Management Agreements are now in place for all states.

-Completed several Cooperative Fire Protection program reviews for Nebraska, Kansas and South Dakota.

-Hazardous fuels mitigation projects were completed by the communities in Jackson and Story, WY; Black Hills of SD; Front Range and West Slope of CO; Chadron area of NE.

#### **Volunteer / local Assistance**

-Over 50 volunteer fire departments were visited for compliance of Title VI and FEPP guidelines.

-The Region conducted three train-the-trainer workshops to promote landowner accountability through FIREWISE and the defensible space state sponsored programs.



## 2004 outlook for the Region...

The Region did an assessment and validated deteriorating forest health with increased tree mortality across all forests. The resultant mortality has increased fire hazard and risk to communities and resources. We felt we needed to change from our current course and a regional approach to fulfill the intent of the NFP was needed.

The Accelerated Watershed/Vegetation Restoration Plan (AWRP), which it is referred to, strategically implements the National Fire Plan goals and objectives while addressing one of the Chiefs four threats specifically Fire and Fuels. AWRP is an accelerated evolution of the National Fire Plan (NFP) that you will be hearing more about in 2004.

### **Fire Preparedness 2004:**

Fire Preparedness funding for 2004 is approximately \$33.6 million. The Region will support five Interagency Hotshot Crews (IHC's) for the season. Tanker bases at Rapid City, JEFFCO and Durango are fully funded and staffed in 2004. A Type 1 helicopter will also be funded and staffed effective June 15 at JEFFCO. All three Interagency Incident Management Teams are funded and staffed for the 2004 fire season including 10 Type 3 IMT, one for each of the 10 zones in the Rocky Mountain Area.

### **Hazardous Fuels:**

The Hazardous Fuels program is funded at \$31.6 million for FY2004 to treat nearly 110,000 acres in the Region. Nearly 60 percent of this accomplishment will be targeted using prescribed fire as tool.

State	Projects	Planned Acres
Colorado	207	66,482
Wyoming	68	23,369
South Dakota	47	10,198
Nebraska	16	5,356
Kansas	1	4,000

*While there are many benefits of fire's use to improve land conditions in controlled situations, risks come with the decision to use fire. We want the public to know that additional resources are factored into the planning of controlled burns to contain and control them in the event of an escape.*

